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EPISTEMIC AUTHORITY AND MANIPULATION: EXPLORING THE 'DARK SIDE' OF SOCIAL AGENCY

abstract

Part of our social reality results from explicitly acknowledging sharing certain ideas, emotions, and value-commitments. Hence it has been addressed as manifestation of joint commitments, shared intentions, we-reasoning or collective intentionality. Yet relevant parts of our social reality come into existence in a different way. There are various forms of intentionally opaque social agency that are founded upon implicit agreements, thereby conveying uncertainty and blurred roles of acting. Their overall character may, for instance, result from an in-built epistemic asymmetry that tends to blur the distinction between voluntary and non-voluntary modes of acting. Arguably, manipulation is a case in point. My main concern in analyzing manipulative actions is to figure out how the ideas of reason and (epistemic) authority are connected with the social constitution and self-understanding of the agents involved.

keywords

manipulation, epistemic authority, cognitive dissonance

Manipulation is widespread (if not to say pervasive) in all areas of human life. It prevails in intimate relationships just as much as in anonymous inter-group interactions. Among the well-known, more or less innocent utilizations of manipulations are techniques to guide our attention, to highlight ideas and arguments according to varying circumstances and audiences, to establish loyalty in larger groups of people and to arouse emotions suited to advance the realization of one's aims whenever these aims cannot be brought about unless others join in. The targets of manipulative techniques in these and other cases are modes of belief formation, processes of deliberation and decision, emotional episodes or attitudes, motives for acting as well as modes of acting.

How does manipulation enter the picture given the actual constitution of human beings? It is a basic and conspicuous fact that although the entire content of an agent's mental life is responsive to socially acquired modes of feeling, thinking, perceiving, and evaluating, it nonetheless evades any direct epistemic access by her fellow men. Our first-personal mode of experience and the ubiquitous need for making ourselves understood by expressing meaning in terms of sounds, signs, bodily behavior, and actions is the most fundamental and powerful lever of manipulation. On these anthropological conditions manipulative actions, moreover, benefit from the limited range and imperfect nature of human reasoning and acting, its interwovenness with desires, emotions and moods, and its susceptibility to weakness of will and other forms of irrationality. It is important to bear in mind this general framework which enables us to understand the possibility of manipulation from the point of view of anthropology (or, for that matter, metaphysics). As soon as we take the stance of everyday life our concern, however, is not to explain the very possibility of manipulation. We rather are interested in its concrete manifestations. We want to come to know how to recognize specific forms of manipulation, how to cope with them and what to think about them with regard to our social relations and our self-understanding as rational and moral agents. For this purpose we are eager to learn more about those concepts and conceptualizations that might be useful for analyzing different brands of manipulation as they often are involved in such diverse activities as advertising, fundraising, coaching soccer teams, child rearing and teaching tasks of all sorts.

In this paper I discuss some specific problems associated with manipulative action. I do so in three steps. First, I present some provisos concerning the term "manipulation", followed by a more precise introduction of the notion of manipulation that I consider proper for my present purpose. Furthermore, I draw attention to several conceptual distinctions that help

to grasp the idea of authority as far as it is involved in manipulative actions. Focusing on the ideas of authority and reason will pave the way for challenging some well-entrenched views with regard to manipulation later on. This especially refers to an important qualification of the idea that manipulator and manipulee are related to each other in an asymmetrical relation (part I). In a second step, it will be argued that there are specific cases, classified as borderline (BOLI) cases, that are interesting owing to some unexpected and irregular forms of social “cooperation” which are realized in a subliminal mode. My suggestion will be to analyze BOLI cases of manipulation by means of Leon Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance (CODI). Doing so allows for considering manipulative actions as multi-layered phenomena which show a more complicated structure than usually assumed (part II). In the third and final part I summarize the outcome of the former investigation with a view to the following questions: Do BOLI cases of manipulation supplement or supplant the prevailing understanding of manipulation? In particular, does their accurate description go beyond the received view on how manipulator and manipulee are tied together (part III)?

Before we enter a more detailed discussion of manipulation a few remarks are in order with regard to my usage of the term “manipulation” as far as two interrelated and controversial aspects are concerned. I consider both aspects as crucial concerning the interpretation of manipulation, yet I do not have enough space to deal with them in a more extensive manner here. The first aspect touches upon the intention of the manipulator which is either taken to be necessary or not. The second aspect refers to the juxtaposition of a neutral or merely descriptive usage of the term “manipulation”, on the one hand, and a so-called moralized usage, on the other. My approach with regard to both issues, ultimately, leads back to the anthropological setting mentioned above.

I.

As is well-known, manipulative actions greatly benefit from certain psychological regularities and biasing effects. Among these is, for example, the so-called *framing effect* according to which the interpretation of information strongly depends on how it is presented to us – whether, for instance, it is presented in a way that invites for a thoroughly pessimistic or optimistic reading. These are well-confirmed results of psychological research. From a philosophical point of view, we are interested in the presuppositions or the basic facts that underlie such specific distortions of our evidential behavior. The most important basic fact is that human agents, as far as their self-perception and self-understanding with regard to their beliefs, emotions, and capabilities in general are concerned, to a large extent depend on (and know themselves as depending on) other-perception. How we feel and what we expect of ourselves in terms of typical or average human accomplishments depends on how we perceive others to perceive us, or expect others to think about us and approach us in the light of certain normative demands. We should therefore recognize that a human agent’s self-understanding as an epistemic and a moral subject is imbued with “social facts”, comprising prevailing ideas, value commitments, common practices concerning emotional expression and the like. If this is true of human existence in general we should not be surprised to see that manipulative actions, which hinder the manipulee to meet certain epistemic ideals, do have an impact on the self-understanding of the manipulee (and, in other ways, potentially on the manipulator, too). In particular, one should expect such an impact on condition that the term “manipulation” indicates the existence of a manipulator’s intention – even if he does not need to be fully aware of this intention in all possible circumstances that go hand in hand with manipulative actions. From the manipulee’s point of view, it does make a crucial difference, both for one’s relation to the manipulator and one’s self-understanding, if one retrospectively realizes that one has been deceived. This difference is remarkable even in those cases where the manipulator convincingly argues that the deception has been effectuated *for the other*

person's own good. (Here, I cannot broach the important issue of how to analyze the intimate connection between manipulation and paternalistic action.) The following line of reasoning is based on the “intentional reading” of manipulative actions sketched above. Hence there is no accidental manipulation according to my terminological decision and understanding. By my lights, the aspect of moral assessment, in a certain sense, enters the stage in the very first step of ascertaining the range of relevant experiences and suitable concepts. However, I do not think that it is appropriate to consider manipulations as *tout court* morally impermissible. If we proceeded like this we had to withdraw the designation “manipulation” in all those cases where closer investigation shows that it is doubtful whether or not the relevant mode of acting could be justified *in the respective context*. Instead of excluding unclear and mixed cases for the benefit of a crystal-clear moral assessment I follow the strategy to start with a broader understanding of manipulation which takes seriously our context-sensible and much more shaded everyday experience of manipulative actions. It is in line with this view not to exclude cases of justified manipulation beforehand. Manipulative actions, of course, should never be treated in a light-minded fashion. They always stand in need of justification. It is only on certain conditions that manipulation can possibly be justified. Plausible examples comprise, above all, instances of paternalistic manipulation, especially where this kind of intervention seems to be unavoidable due to the lack of any rational alternative. This is true, for instance, with regard to the upbringing and education of young children. Among those who elaborated this very briefly sketched general attitude toward a normative assessment of manipulation, is Marcia Baron. She convincingly argues that manipulating people is not always wrong although it is generally wrong. This allows for individual cases of manipulation that, under the given circumstances, appear as the best option. Acknowledging such cases does not, as Baron stresses, change the overall approach to consider manipulative actions as generally objectionable. Neither does it mean to swerve from the general demand for justification (cf. Baron 2014, p. 106 f). Especially with a view to the great variety of relevant cases of manipulation this seems to be a reasonable view. (It also finds support in the idea of an accurate moral phenomenology that is meant to pre-date our conceptual decisions and theoretical work in ethics.) Whether or not single instances of manipulation are morally permissible depends on the precise aims that are meant to be realized in the contexts at issue, the intent of the manipulator, the means used in order to secure success, and the mental condition and overall capabilities of the manipulees. Yet regardless of how many cases of justified manipulation we are able to glean and agree upon, this does not neutralize the generally objectionable nature of manipulative actions.¹ When I now go ahead with introducing some basic conceptual issues I do so in a minimalist sense. My purpose is to establish a suitable framework for discussion of manipulative actions. As a proper starting-point we may raise the following question: does manipulation and how does manipulation violate epistemic authority? Answering this question, first of all, requires outlining my understanding of “manipulation” and “epistemic authority”. The idea of manipulation I am going to work with can be explained as follows. When x (*manipulator*) performs a manipulative action by communicating with y (*manipulee*) the following conditions must be fulfilled: (i) x has the intention to influence y's beliefs or belief formation, her emotional attitudes, her decisions, her motives for acting or modes of acting

1 Arguing along these lines, Baron therefore feels committed to a moralized understanding of the term “manipulation”. However, she carefully wards off an understanding according to which we should equate “moralized” with “immoral”. “In holding that ‘manipulative’ is a moralized term I was claiming not that it is part of the meaning of the term that what it refers to is *immoral*, but only that it is morally objectionable – but of course something can be morally objectionable yet be morally justified and in that sense not immoral” (Baron 2014, pp. 98 f).

in a non-argumentative though non-coercive way²; (ii) x does so with a view to a certain end he has in mind when he sets going the manipulative action; he wants to meet the respective end by arguing y into believing, feeling or acting in the determined way; (iii) while exerting this intentional influence on y x is eager not to let y know about the real nature of their interaction; this policy of concealment or opaque communication, respectively, includes both the end x aims to realize and the specific ways by means of which he strives to do so.³

According to the above, the manipulative action establishes a relation between at least two (and possibly more) persons that can be characterized as epistemically asymmetrical insofar as there is a relevant lack of knowledge on part of the manipulee and a corresponding privilege on part of the manipulator. This asymmetry gives rise to the presumption that the epistemic authority of the manipulee is (more or less seriously) impaired. In this vein, the above definition addresses the intuition that lies beneath the four standard accounts of manipulation presently discussed. Correspondingly, manipulation is understood as founded upon deception (*The Deception View*), as imposing harm on the manipulee (*The Harm-based View*), as impairing the manipulee's autonomy (*The Autonomy-Undermining View*) and as bypassing or subverting her rational capacities (*The Bypass or Subvert View*) (cf. Gorin 2014a).

Now, how does the idea of epistemic authority come into play with regard to the agents involved in manipulative actions? There are two aspects that should be considered. On the one hand, there are requirements of rational and moral agency. On the other hand, one may link up epistemic authority with the idea of expertise. As to the first aspect, "epistemic authority", generally, refers to a properly functioning reason-responsiveness which is a prerequisite of rational behavior. In particular, there are certain rational standards with regard to meeting epistemic ideals that specify our idea of epistemic authority. These standards, for instance, determine how belief formation and belief changes, if ideally rational, should take place,

2 Or: in a not straightforwardly and manifestly (strongly) coercive way. In the present context I cannot enter discussion of the notion of coercion although it is important to give a more precise account of how manipulation and coercion are related to each other and nonetheless differ. According to my understanding, the designation "manipulative actions" picks out certain modes of acting that are placed somewhere in between an ideally rational behavior of reasoning and persuasion, on the one side, and various forms of strong coercion and violence, on the other side. Manipulations are clearly distinct from both rational persuasion and strong coercion, especially if the latter is mixed up with physical threat. Yet I take it that manifestations of manipulation allow for gradually approaching the one or the other opposite. There are manipulations that, for instance, come close to *coercive offers* and therefore are farther away from rational and moral acceptance than, for instance, manipulations that merely consist in emphasizing different aspects of one's talk according to different audiences. As weak forms of coercion may be indistinguishable from manipulation, it also seems that there is no overall clear-cut distinction between rhetoric and manipulation: the former can gradually transform into the latter.

3 In this respect, manipulation and coercion largely coincide. Both are distinct from violence that exclusively operates on the body, and they seem to be distinct from violence in the very same manner. "Not all violent acts coerce, and not all coercion uses violence. Some acts of violence aim only at another's body: for example, acts done by those who have run amok, what we call 'mindless violence'. Violence can be mute and brute. It need not demand anything of its victims or of others; there may be no implied conditions that victims or others can meet in order to avert it. Coercion (including coercion that uses violence) is different: it has propositional content. Coercers have to communicate with those whom they coerce, and fail if they merely destroy agents whose compliance they seek. This is sometimes hard to see because victims of coercion may also be victims of violence inflicted by their coercers. For example, if a coercer tortures a child in order to get her to reveal where somebody can be found, the child is a victim both of coercion and of violence: violence is the means to her coercion. However, other examples show that victims of coercion and victims of violence undertaken to coerce may be distinct: if a coercer tortures a child in order to get her father to reveal somebody's whereabouts, of which the child knows nothing, then it is the father who is the victim of coercion, although violence is done to the child. It is the father who can comply or refuse to comply; the child can do neither. In yet other cases coercers inflict no violence. They may rely on threat, menace and gesture that suggest varied harms to achieve their ends. Expert coercers concentrate on securing compliance; violence is important to them only when it produces results more effectively than other approaches" (O'Neill 2000, pp. 82 f).

how one should gather evidences and take seriously counterevidences, whether and on what conditions testimony could be considered a reliable source of knowledge, and so on. The second aspect that comes to mind when talking about epistemic authority refers to an agent's knowledge, especially with regard to certain fields of knowledge. A person's expertise may include a broad range of different fields and types of knowledge. For instance, it may cover technical, mathematical, and ethical knowledge.

What is important in the present context is that both aspects, that is, the requirements and methodological ideals of rational and moral agency, on the one hand, and the idea of expertise, on the other, need to be distinguished from various forms of social authority (cf. De George 1985, pp. 26-61). Especially with a view to manipulative actions, it is crucial to recognize that epistemic authority does not include and must be distinguished from executive authority which is a special form of social authority. "In general, an executive authority has the right or power to act for or on someone else. A nonexecutive authority does not" (De George 1985, pp. 22). Epistemic authority is a non-executive type of authority. Rational agency, for instance with regard to belief changes or deliberative processes that aim at determining the right mode of acting, is a *content-related* form of thinking, judging and communicating that operates in terms of rational persuasion. Contrary to this, if someone acts on behalf of her social authority she does not expect that others follow her views or demands solely on basis of objective evidence and arguments. Rather, she relies upon a certain social structure, including hierarchical relations or relations of subordination. It is on behalf of a certain social position and the relating equipment with power, authorization, and prerogatives that the agent's demands are rendered efficacious and are meant to be rightfully efficacious. The other person who is expected to meet the relating demands is not addressed with a view to her content-related rational abilities. She is addressed with regard to her *attitude* towards her social embeddedness in general and her social roles in particular.⁴

Based on the above definition of "manipulation" and "authority of reason" we can now answer the question whether manipulation does violate and how it does violate epistemic authority. Given that we agree on the above characterization of manipulation as an asymmetric relation we may add a further question: Whose epistemic authority is in danger to be violated owing to manipulative actions?

On the one hand, *the manipulator* acts in the light of his unchallenged epistemic authority insofar as, on usual conditions, he has no evidence to doubt that he really has the intention he has, that he wants to realize the end he is aware of as ultimate purpose of his manipulative interference. Acting as an epistemic authority in this way, of course, does not include complete control on the factual success. However, in order to "sincerely" and determinately push through his deceiving project, that is, maintaining the intentional structure of his manipulative action, he must inevitably (though possibly unnoticed) transgress the limits of epistemic authority: for the sake of his success he must act as if having epistemic authority would, by the same token, legitimate the exertion of executive authority.

The manipulee, on the other hand, is engaged in forming beliefs, making up her mind and pondering motives and modes of acting *that unbeknownst to her the manipulator has made*

⁴ For a special interpretation of the above distinction see Hampton 1998, pp. 83-122. Jean Hampton juxtaposes an *authority of reason* whose obligatory force is grounded in necessity (i.e., in necessary reasons to act, choose, or believe in a certain way in certain circumstances), on the one hand, and a *psycho-social authority*, on the other. In case of the latter the obligatory force of "its reason to act, choose, or believe in a certain way in certain circumstances makes reference (only) to certain contingent facts about the society and the psychology of the people who take themselves to be subject to the norm. Error theories, expressivist theories, and cognitive theories of normativity presuppose this conception of normative authority" (Hampton 1998, p. 99).

palatable for her. To the extent that there is an epistemic authority operative on part of the manipulee, we must assume that its normal efficiency (e.g. with regard to gathering and checking evidences and counter-evidences) is more or less seriously hampered. Given that there is at least some amount of epistemic authority left on part of the manipulee, it does not suffice to argue that someone falls prey to manipulation because a manipulator successfully conceals his true intention, thereby deceiving the manipulee. To some extent at least, it also must be possible to ascribe epistemic responsibility to the manipulee who, in some ways or others, fails to (fully) realize what is going on. Given that we encounter real cases of manipulation the manipulee's epistemic authority undoubtedly is impaired. Yet it is not annulled as it were in case of a straightforward loss of intellectual competence as it may occur, for instance, in the wake of brain surgery. In terms of competence the manipulee's epistemic authority is in working order⁵ although its actual manifestation is inadequate (or "dysfunctional") due to another person's willful interference. The manipulee, so far as her first-personal experience of the interaction with the manipulator is concerned, acts within the proper limits of epistemic authority: she is sincerely engaged in the relating business of deliberating or acting. She nonetheless is not or only gradually aware of the epistemic role played by her interaction partner. However, as long as we consider her as a competent rational and moral agent at all, we must assume that, *in principle, she could have seen through the attempt of deceiving her* (and actually would do so on proper conditions). The above reference to *the principle of alternative possibilities* (someone could have decided or acted otherwise than she actually did) means that notwithstanding given restrictions on the manipulee's freedom of action, which come in the wake of successful manipulations, we do ascribe freedom of will and, correspondingly, freedom of thought to the agent. Refraining from doing so is neither in the interest of the manipulee whom we then would not consider a rationally and morally respectable agent any more. Paradoxical as this may appear at first sight, it is not in the interest of the manipulator either. In order to realize his manipulative intention the manipulator must be interested in arousing the impression that the manipulee's compliance has been granted voluntarily.⁶ It is therefore important for the manipulator, too, that we do not categorically deny the manipulee's ability to see through manipulative encroachments on her mental life.

It is, however, a different question whether a manipulee can *reasonably be expected* to unmask a manipulative action *given the particular circumstances at hand*. Answering this question, among others, required investigating the more or less skillfully practiced deception on part of the manipulator, the overall character of the personal or impersonal relation between manipulator and manipulee as well as the latter's former experiences with similar situations. To the extent that the manipulee given the concrete situation, could unmask the manipulation but abstains from doing so it is legitimate to raise the issue of shared responsibility for manipulative actions notwithstanding their epistemically asymmetrical structure. Considering the possibility of shared responsibility on conditions of manipulative actions does not amount to denying that the responsibility originally and to a considerably larger extent lies with the manipulator. Still, granting that the manipulee's response, on

5 Strictly speaking, assuming this to be so presupposes that the manipulee's history of epistemic experiences has not mostly or strongly been determined by exposure to manipulative actions. For simplicity's sake I suppose here that we are talking about a single episode of manipulation. Hence I leave untouched the question what sorts of effects are to be expected from habitualized manipulations.

6 Depending on the concrete circumstances it may be no easy task at all to arouse this impression. It requires making the manipulee feel as if she responded to a legitimate manifestation of epistemic authority while the other person actually wants her to acquiesce in demands that originate from a self-appointed social authority.

certain conditions, *can* give rise to a co-responsibility acknowledges and strengthens her autonomy as a rational and moral agent. Given appropriate conditions, which offer a real chance to unveil the manipulator's true purpose, we indeed expect the manipulee to regain the stance of voluntary action by either approving or disapproving of the manipulative action. The epistemic asymmetry in typical cases of manipulation characterizes the manipulee's acting as non-voluntary although she may (like to) consider herself to act voluntarily. In a garden-variety of cases of manipulation the overall situation, however, seems to be more adequately described by acknowledging the non-voluntariness of her action. On this condition, it is plausible to argue that the manipulee does not know the true meaning of her own responses and actions though the question why she fails to acquire this knowledge leaves room for the above sketched intricacies of shared responsibility. Yet, first and foremost, being subject to a manipulative action means that a person is lead to approve of certain beliefs, decisions or actions that in some sense are forced upon her on part of a manipulator who does not care about her own desires, beliefs, and ends. The *non-voluntary* character, as seen from the manipulee's point of view, mirrors this recklessness on part of the manipulator. Usually, the manipulator will act *voluntarily* although it is easy to construct situations in which he is acting involuntary. This is the case when, for instance, a kidnapper threatens to kill someone's child if the father does not succeed in manipulating some third person in order to set going a certain action whose beneficiary is the kidnapper. Contrary to the manipulee's non-voluntary acting, a person who is subject to coercion acts *involuntarily*: he is fully aware of the coercer's intention and his own position; both coercer and coerced are clear about the fact that the latter does not want to be treated like that. What then is the benefit of going beyond the usual distinction between voluntary and involuntary actions and considering non-voluntary actions as a third category? As argued above, using this additional category allows for a more accurate description of the manipulee's epistemic stance. Considering the non-voluntary character of the manipulee's compliance we do not need to (tacitly) deny her epistemic authority although we are ready to grant that its workings are (considerably) impaired. Characterizing her response as a non-voluntary mode of acting leaves room for a more active role on part of the "victims" of manipulations: under certain circumstances, she may somehow avoid to become aware of the irregular, that is, rationally insufficient character of the belief formation process she is running through. The following section takes up the above considerations, including the intuitions grasped by the four standard accounts of manipulation (deceiving, doing harm, undermining autonomy, bypassing or subverting rational capacities), as a useful starting point. Yet I shall argue that they neither comprise the variety of cases nor the full complexity of paradigmatic everyday experiences of manipulation. I shall designate those cases that complicate and partially undermine the standard views of manipulative actions as "borderline (BOLI) cases". I take it that analyzing such cases challenges the idea that the above-mentioned standard views could be applied in an easy and unequivocal way. Part of this is to make explicit certain idealizing assumptions that, for instance, seep into the analysis by restricting one's attention to episodic instances instead of considering manipulation in the light of historical concerns, both with a view to the habitualized of modes of acting and biographical 'depths' of the agents involved.

- II. As announced earlier, my proposal is to analyze BOLI cases of manipulation by referring to Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance (CODI). First, let me shortly explain why I think that it is suitable and promising to work with this theory in the present context. Festinger starts his investigation by pointing out that in human minds unfit relations between different cognitive states regularly occur. These relations either hold between different beliefs

or between beliefs and those actions that one reasonably expects to be motivated by these beliefs. The unfit relations at issue are called “inconsistencies” or “dissonances”. Two elements *x* and *y* stand in a dissonant relation if, “*considering these two alone, the obverse of one element would follow from the other. [...] x and y are dissonant if not-*x* follows from *y*.*” (Festinger 1957, p. 13) Based on this definition, Festinger introduces the following theses:

1. The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance.
2. When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance (Festinger 1957, p. 3).

The sum total of all those modes of behavior that are suited to reduce dissonance could be called “strategies of dissonance reduction”. Festinger himself does not use the term “strategies” in the present context. It is indeed questionable to do so because any talk about strategies assumes an explicit choice to avail oneself of certain patterns of response. Yet, as I will explain shortly, it is not clear whether it is suitable to conjure up the terminology of choices and consciously employed decision procedures when it comes to describe different modes of coping with dissonant cognitive states. Festinger does not do so. He explicitly denies that human beings are engaged in reflection and deliberation when trying to reduce dissonance. One distinctive benefit of the CODI account is that it allows for understanding human behavior within a broad range of different types of situations. In particular, it sheds light on attempts to rationalize inconsistencies. This is remarkable insofar as an often used strategy of manipulation consists in arguing other persons into adhering to exploded views or giving up well-grounded ideas by encouraging a more or less biased treatment of evidences, introducing additional, yet inconclusive arguments or constructing indirect lines of reasoning. Proceeding like this, the agent, on the surface of things, produces “justifications”. He does so by ignoring, downplaying or misconstruing the relevance of counter-evidences.

What is the alleged role of rationalization with regard to our discussion of manipulation? Two issues force themselves upon us which I would like to mention though I cannot dig into them here in a more detailed manner. From the point of view of the manipulee who is engaged in reducing more or less obvious inconsistencies, it is, first, near at hand to think about “self-manipulation”. It is, however, controversial whether it is of any help to introduce this term which even may appear as self-refuting. Not surprisingly, the same objection has been brought forth with regard to the term “self-deception” (cf. Rinofner-Kreidl 2012a, 2012b). Secondly, analyzing manipulative actions we should bear in mind that there is a variety of different forms of cooperation human agents enter and a variety of motives for doing so. In some cases forms of cooperation and motives present themselves as mutually dependent and vary accordingly; in other cases they do not. Occasionally, human agents cooperate with regard to jointly realizing ends that are unanimously acknowledged as worthwhile or even vital for living a human life. Yet they also cooperate for a variety of other reasons. They link together in order to commit murder or robbery, to exploit the working power of the poor and uneducated, or to instigate others to join for cyber-mobbing. What is of primary interest in the present context (and this leads us back to the issue of rationalization) is that human agents also cooperate, consciously or not, for the purpose of shaping their own minds, that is, reworking their past experiences and their self-understanding. Things like that need not be done within the horizon of solitary reflection. In a certain sense and intensity, we are constantly occupied with responding to other persons’ experiences and self-understandings without even realizing that we are so engaged. Part of this also is that, for the better or worse, we are used to play on other persons’

inconsistencies, as Festinger puts it. This can take a variety of different forms that should interest us if we are about to investigate manipulations. People, for instance, cooperate in order to share certain demanding tasks like upbringing their kids or re-shaping the communal caring institutions for the elderly or for disabled persons. However, on a different level of description it can also be adequate to depict what they are doing as an attempt to render invisible their fears and accumulated scruples or disappointments. Thus, whenever we are absorbed in individual or collective actions we shape our public life and the world as a whole and ourselves, that is, the mindset by means of which we approach the world.

As I will argue in the following, we should take into account a deep level description with regard to certain cases of manipulation. Doing so we should also feel encouraged to specify the precise meaning and range of so-called "cooperations". In any case, it is natural to include tacit and pre-reflective modes of cooperation which seem to be widespread in all human societies. I take it that the relating patterns of behavior differ depending on how more or less remote they are from processes of reflective endorsement and paradigmatic cases of explicitly acknowledged (manifest) forms of cooperation. Take, for example, the tacit and pre-reflective modes of communication and cooperation that are triggered by processes of emotional contagion which crop up on occasions like terror attacks, running amok or public weddings. These processes, of course, are different from the pre-reflective modes of communication and cooperation that are involved in the habitual rationalization of an alcoholic's akratic behavior which is tacitly supported by his wife and family in order to ward off outbursts of aggression. What is important, in the first place, is whether we are able to make sense of and define a suitably broad range of different forms of social cooperation, including unusual or subliminal forms that on first sight may appear paradoxical. Basically, *cooperation* requires that there is some non-incidental mutual relation between the agents that comes into being on occasion of a certain (succession of) action(s) and that the latter is adequately characterized by holding that *the mode of one's acting is in accordance with another's mode of acting*. Thereby, "acting in accordance with" does not necessarily require that the agents involved share an overall *common* aim whose realization is brought about by acting together.

According to a widespread view, the idea of cooperation and the idea of manipulation are mutually exclusive. Acknowledging this view, which brings to bear the above-mentioned standard items (deceiving, doing harm, undermining autonomy, bypassing or subverting rational capacities), one may argue as follows. There is good evidence to consider manipulative actions as falling beyond the scope of cooperative actions. There is not even a minor overlapping between the two. This seems true whatever liberal modes of interpretation we advance with regard to the notion of cooperation. Accordingly, embarking on manipulation amounts to a harsh denial of cooperation. Moreover, it is the manipulee who has to pay the prize for the manipulator's autonomous decision to realize the action in question. Human agents who are exposed to manipulative actions risk losing control over their own processes of thinking, belief formation and acting. In any case, it is the very intention of the manipulator to withdraw the power of control from the manipulee with regard to her own mental states and actions. Realizing this intention is a fundamental encroachment on the autonomy of another person whether or not this other person, in the concrete situation, is fully or only dimly aware of what is going on or even totally ignorant of it. Given this to be a correct description of the received view on manipulation it is near at hand to conclude that for rejecting the manipulator's mode of acting it is sufficient to argue as follows: The other person would deny, and justifiably denied, being treated like that if she were (fully) aware of what is going on (given that there is a real chance for her, to attain this awareness).

For the present purpose, let us put aside those special cases of *weak paternalism* in which there is no other option than taking control over issues that are of vital interest for the other person

who is unable to do so herself. In such cases we are faced with a severely reduced physical condition that excludes reasonable judgment, for instance due to so-called persistent vegetative state⁷ or otherwise severely retarded mental state. Having in mind such situations, which require different treatment, we could enter discussion whether cases of weak paternalism should be classified as exceptional cases of a justified manipulation. I hesitate to do so because these cases differ from other instances of justified manipulation with regard to the crucial aspect of the manipulator's intention to deceive the other person and his denial to disclose his true and overall purpose. Leaving aside weak paternalism and similar issues we focus on the majority of manipulative actions which take place on less extreme conditions. With a view to these non-exceptional cases, I wish to argue as follows. Whenever a manipulator intentionally takes control over another person's mental states (beliefs, emotional states, modes of acting), he acts as if the other person need not be taken seriously as a rational and moral agent. In this sense, the manipulator acts recklessly with regard to the other person's warranted claim to think, decide and act on conditions that no other person is allowed to surreptitiously tinker with in order to disguise the true situation (as it presents itself to the manipulator). To be sure, this is *not* to maintain that it were fully in the agent's own power to determine or modify these conditions if the manipulator abstained from his interference. It is part of the contingencies of human life that agents never have complete control on the conditions of their thinking and acting. Neither do they gain (with presumably very few exceptions) complete transparency with regard to these conditions. However, if a person, according to some received standard, is a rationally competent thinker and morally mature agent she may legitimately demand not to be deceived (or mislead or intentionally be left in the dark) about the conditions of her own thinking and acting. I therefore hold that the recklessness of the manipulator consists in his disrespecting the manipulee's rational and moral authority, that is, in his disregarding or actively overruling it. It is the issue of respect that lies beneath when it comes to assess the permissibility or non-permissibility of manipulative actions. According to my understanding, this is equally true of moral and epistemic assessments. What is the upshot of this consideration? *The manipulee, if undeceived and asked, can reasonably be expected to have good reasons to deny being subject to manipulative actions.* Pointing at special cases of justified manipulation does not annul this general assessment.⁸ It merely reminds us that the complexity of those situations in which human agents interact with one another can well lead us to an all things considered judgment according to which a concrete manipulation, *notwithstanding its wrongful nature when considered as a general type of action*, should be accepted in order to secure other benefits (value commitments).

Coming back to the CODI theses should help us to see why this is not the whole story. Or why the manipulee, notwithstanding this basic threat of losing respect and self-respect, can find herself in a surprisingly unclear or equivocal state of mind as far as her resistance to a manipulation is concerned that she is dimly or openly aware of. (It will soon become clear why a certain amount of minimal awareness of the situation is a necessary requirement of the following line of reasoning.) I want to argue that, referring to a certain segment of manipulative actions, the CODI theses helps to understand why those who suffer from the effects of manipulation nonetheless do not actively strive for disentangling from the manipulator's grip, but seem to acquiesce to this detrimental treatment.⁹ It is vital for understanding the cases at

⁷ Recently, a presumably more suitable designation has been proposed: "Unresponsive Wakefulness Syndrome" (Syndrom reaktionsloser Wachheit).

⁸ Take, for instance, situations where a life-threatening danger has to be warded off without having a chance to exhaustingly discuss the situation in due time with the person who risks losing her life.

⁹ The following description does not take up the further thought that denying a person her proper respect as a

issue that the manipulee's acquiescence does not take place in terms of an explicit agreement and approval. The manipulee, who is at least dimly aware of what is going on, suffers from the manipulator's encroachment. She does so in a direct or literal sense concerning the beliefs, decisions, or modes of action that the manipulator wants her to accept. She also suffers in an indirect sense with a view to her self-understanding that is considerably impaired and challenged by the manipulative action. If this is a correct description how then could it happen that manipulees, in certain types of situations, nevertheless do show the above-mentioned unclear or equivocal state of mind, meaning that they *have good reasons to resist the manipulation, but they also have good reasons not to do so*?¹⁰ While the former tendency has been extensively discussed in the literature the second has been largely ignored or at least not explained in a satisfying manner. This task can be met by utilizing the CODI theory.

From the point of view of the person who suffers psychological discomfort due to cognitive dissonances rationalization is a proper means to avoid putting up with dissonances. From various reasons, an individual agent's rationalizations can be either socially supported and reinforced or socially complicated and impeded (cf. Rinofner-Kreidl 2010). Granted that the occurrence of dissonances, among others, vary with cultural backgrounds and the past experiences of the persons involved (cf. Festinger 1957, p. 15), we may assume that the precise amount of psychological distress that manipulative actions bring forth on part of the manipulee vary from case to case. Rendering invisible or rationalizing dissonances will require correspondingly varying endeavors. Without entering into the relating details, which leave ample room for psychological research, let us capture the basic fact: "Only rarely, if ever, are they [the inconsistencies, i.e., dissonances that regularly occur in human minds, SR] accepted psychologically as *inconsistencies* by the person involved. Usually more or less successful attempts are made to rationalize them" (Festinger 1957, p. 2).

If this is right we come to see what might, with due caution and proper restriction to special cases of manipulative actions, be recognized as an indirect and tacit or subliminal benefit on part of the manipulee. Accordingly, there is a strong motivation not to explicitly approve of this benefit and even, if possible, not to realize that one is subject to an action (or a recurring pattern of interpersonal behavior) that forces upon oneself the undesired and degrading role of a manipulee. However, this negative or even hardly bearable action has the unintended positive effect that it helps the manipulee to reduce her cognitive dissonance. Let us take an everyday example, which combines coercion, manipulation and physical threat or violence in order to make clear what is at stake here and what kind of processes are meant by "dissonance reduction".¹¹

rational and moral agent does have an impact on her motivation and actual (real) ability to offer resistance to those who intend to denigrate, coerce or manipulate her.

10 Compare for instance the discussion on whether autonomy, if conceived as a real capability of real persons instead of an ideal capability of entirely reasonable ideal agents, actually is overdemanding, and particularly so in certain fields of applied ethics (medical treatment). Given that autonomy can occasionally be experienced as "threatening" in this sense, one should reckon with a certain proclivity for voluntary subjection to paternalistic intervention.

11 As indicated above, it is difficult to give a clear-cut distinction between coercion and manipulation (see fn. 2 and fn. 3). Even subsuming the notion of manipulation under the notion of coercion, thereby choosing to work with a more encompassing notion of coercion, is not absurd. Among those who follow this path is Alan Rosenbaum who asserts that "coercion and physical force are not the same thing as many are inclined to suppose. Instead, physical force is an instrument, among others, of coercion and not its essence; for coercion can be shown to occur in the absence of physical force. Other techniques for influencing someone's behavior, such as paternalism, manipulation, psychosurgery, bribes, incentives, and offers, will be of considerable interest when we attempt [...] to further distinguish coercion from its various instruments, as well as to demarcate the often blurry boundary line between the coercive and the noncoercive aspects of these techniques" (Rosenbaum 1986, pp. 38 f).

The humiliated woman: Christine is a 46 years old woman who has been married for more than twenty years. On the whole, her marriage is an average one. It could be worse. At least, this is what Christine herself says if she compares her situation with those of other couples she knows. Christine and her husband Lucas have got two children (Kira, 20, and Paul, 19) who recently left their parent's house. Kira went abroad for doing her studies and Paul successfully applied for his first job in another town not far away. In course of the years Lucas has turned into an alcoholic although he stubbornly denies this to be the case. Especially when drunken, he becomes rude and aggressive, shouting at his wife and scolding her for her lazy, meaningless life as a 'luxury woman', as he says, who spends her time with shopping and painting her face. Regularly, such scenes end with heavy arguing and, occasionally, with Lucas' battering his wife. When this happened for the first time, Christine was deeply terrified and enraged. She was determined to leave her husband. When she told him that she would not any more tolerate his violent behavior and increasing addictiveness, he calmly replied that if she really dared to leave him and turn their intimate matters into a neighborhood gossip, thereby ruining his existence as an entrepreneur, he would thoroughly get her down. This totally unexpected kind of response left Christine speechless. A few days later, Lucas comes back to her previous conversation and tells her that meanwhile he had talked with a friend of his, a lawyer, who had assured him that Christine, given that she could not prove any maltreatment, would not have the slightest chance to get through with her wild stories. Moreover, Lucas reminds her that she does not have any income of her own and no considerable savings and that it certainly will be pretty hard for her to find a job since she has left her former job as a secretary two decades ago. On another occasion, Lucas assures her that, should she decide to talk with Kira and Paul, he would deny everything. This should be easy, according to Lucas, because they never witnessed anything suspicious. They simply had no reason to believe her and certainly would not do so given that they always had admired their smart and entertaining father. Suddenly, the week after, Lucas begins to talk about Christine's and his first dates and how delighted and happy they were having met each other. Lucas also mentions the sad story of Christine's childhood and reminds her how often, in course of the past years, she had told him what good luck she had to escape the dull atmosphere at her parent's house and live with Lucas. In course of the next months, Luca's behavior wavers between conciliatory moods, making Christine promises and trying to drink less, and his well-known outbursts of rage and intimation. Christine feels depressed and paralyzed. She is unable to take the initiative and leave her husband. Moreover, the very self-assured manner in which he speaks with her and his unshakably confidence to have control over the situation exert a deeply distracting effect on her. Especially Lucas' story about how he 'rescued' her from the overly conservative and soul-destroying atmosphere at her parent's home, how she then started an entirely new life do not leave her untouched. On the other hand, she is full of fear and sorrow when she thinks about how an independent life of her own could look like. Yet she feels that Lucas could be right as far as her missing experiences and working practice are concerned. She feels trapped.

How should we analyze Christine's situations according to the CODI account? It is obvious that she has good reasons to get out of her violent and degrading marriage with Lucas. On the other hand, from her point of view, she also has good reasons not to leave her husband, given the good times they had and all the things she enjoyed over the years. In this particular situation of conflicting demands it is impossible to relieve the pressure of the resulting dissonance by reducing its overall importance. Both options (leaving her husband and not doing so) are

very important and consequential to Christine (cf. Festinger 1957, p. 22). The magnitude of the dissonance, which is caused by the existential impact of the elements (options) involved, therefore increases the pressure to reduce it.¹² An important part of the dissonance at issue is the disquieting mixture of feelings Christine has to cope with: gratefulness, joy and happiness when she thinks about the early years of her marriage, shame, fear, anger, indignation and depression as far as her present situation is concerned, feelings of uncertainties and doubts when she thinks about the future. Lucas skillfully addresses this bunch of feelings. His well-chosen stories and reminders increasingly take a grip on his wife. By asking Christine to confirm their shared history as couple and a flourishing family Lucas offers a *reward for compliance*. By telling her about his conversation with the lawyer, by threatening to lie to their adult children and by confronting her with her obvious shortcomings with regard to higher education, professional life and career planning Lucas offers a subtle variety of *punishments for non-compliance*. Both manipulative strategies – rewarding compliance and punishing non-compliance – are efficient because of Lucas intimate knowledge about those things that are important or even essential in his wife’s life: staying in good relations with her children, having an intact family, living in safety and harmony. Provided with these information Lucas is able to act as an *expert manipulator* who avails himself of his knowledge about his wife’s sense of self and integrity.¹³

It should be noted that, according to Festinger, dissonances are both culture-dependent and dependent on past experiences. We therefore should say that “two cognitive elements may be dissonant for a person living in one culture and not for a person living in another, or for a person with one set of experiences and not for a person with another” (Festinger 1957, p. 15). Granting this to be so, it is near at hand to assume that the better a manipulator is acquainted with the relevant backgrounds the more efficient or successful his manipulation will be. Fructifying another person’s dissonances greatly benefits from knowing about the “sore points” in the other person’s history of experiences. Obviously, considering the manipulee’s relevant self-understanding goes beyond its episodic statement. It requires digging into past experiences and their appropriation. “Self-understanding”, if informative at all in investigating different sorts of manipulative actions, must be understood as a “historical” notion which might even have moral implications. If we agree that we are stronger obliged not to disappoint the expectations of our dearest that we will behave in a trustworthy manner towards them, manipulating those with whom one is intimately connected and familiar, therefore having the best chance to push one’s ideas through (as an expert manipulator), is even worse from a moral point of view than trying to non-argumentatively manipulating strangers.

The CODI account helps to understand how persons like Christine cope with deeply ambiguous motivations and incompatible tendencies to act. Going ahead without constantly suffering from the tension produced by the opposing elements is only possible by either changing her behavior, that is, changing her life, or by changing her beliefs. Given that Christine does not succeed in leaving her unhappy marriage the only way to reduce her cognitively dissonant situation lies in re-interpreting it in a way that it loses its depressing outlook. The memories

12 Cf. “If two elements are dissonant with one another, the magnitude of the dissonance will be a function of the importance of the elements. The more these elements are important to, or valued by, the person, the greater will be the magnitude of a dissonant relation between them” (Festinger 1957, p. 16).

13 In introducing this designation I follow Onora O’Neill who coined the phrase *expert coercer*. Cf. O’Neill 2000, pp. 82, 90-95. See e.g.: “An unrefusable ‘offer’ is not, indeed, one where non-compliance is made logically or physically impossible for all victims; it is one that a particular victim cannot refuse without deep damage to sense of self or identity” (O’Neill 2000, p. 91).

and thoughts Lucas' utters, his ingratiating tone as well as his angry reproaches and threats all are meant to manipulatively stimulate a re-interpretation of the entire situation and Christine's part in it, in particular. Lucas' non-argumentative influence, which pushes the right buttons by addressing Christine's individual uncertainties and weaknesses, aims at de-evaluating her considerations about having a divorce. The more Christine suffers from her incompatible motives and related alternatives for acting and self-understanding, the more she will be susceptible to Lucas' manipulative interventions. In the light of Lucas' offers – in terms of both rewards for compliance and punishments for non-compliance – Christine is likely to gain a more positive interpretation of the overall situation and, consequently, will give up her project of starting a new life of her own.¹⁴ If this is the intended outcome on part of the manipulator, Lucas' interventions have succeeded in making her “*complicit in a way in which brute violence does not*” (O'Neill 2000, p. 89).¹⁵ Complicity does not undermine the manipulative character of the act. Yet it renders the situation more complicated in terms of shared responsibility. Hence we may talk about BOLI cases of manipulation.

Let us take stock. What do have we attained so far? I have argued that the CODI theory gives us a proper theoretical tool to understand the deeply ambivalent motivational situation on part of the manipulee in BOLI cases of manipulation. Following this account can lead to the *prima facie* paradoxical statement that the manipulee, however indignantly denying if explicitly asked, “receives support” from the manipulator in neglecting to adequately see the situation at hand and, therefore, tacitly approves of the manipulator's attempts to argue her into certain beliefs or modes of acting (or forbearance, respectively) *if this presents itself as the only efficient way of reducing her cognitive dissonance*.¹⁶ On certain conditions, it will even be plausible to describe the epistemically deficient grasp on reality on part of the manipulee as a paradoxical striving for self-relief¹⁷ which may go hand in hand with self-deception. That is, the manipulee looks for “receiving support” or gladly accepts support in neglecting to adequately attend to her own self and self-understanding.¹⁸ As stressed above those specific brands of manipulative actions that can be analyzed by means of CODI do not represent the most typical cases of manipulation. Yet if the above analysis is on the right track, we should also take into account cases of irregular manipulations which appear as more complex and multi-layered interactions in the way described above. Their “rationale” or overall nature cannot be understood if we exclusively restrict ourselves to the more obvious aspects. A CODI based analysis of manipulative actions offers a paradigmatic view on how deeply and how tightly the psychological make-up of human beings is connected with various forms of social interacting.

Current philosophical literature on manipulation offers analyses with regard to the following aspects: a) the manipulator's intention to non-argumentatively influence another person so

III.

14 Cf. “Manipulation can make someone fall short of one ideal while causing her to meet another ideal” (Barnhill 2014, p. 63).

15 Though O'Neill refers to coercive encroachments when uttering the above statement it also perfectly fits the situation of manipulation as described above.

16 Cf. “In general, establishing a social reality by gaining the agreement and support of other people is one of the major ways in which a cognition can be changed when the pressures to change it are present” (Festinger 1957, p. 21).

17 Although this is a markedly Heideggerian idea (“*Seinsentlastung*”) one may benefit from it in other contexts without going into the details of Heidegger's existential-phenomenological ontology.

18 Relating to the example discussed above, an additional complication can occur which I cannot dig into in the present context. It can happen that self-deception or a thoroughly biased access to reality (e. g. in terms of a resentment) also comes into play on part of the manipulator. Of course, the manipulator's epistemic authority need not remain unchallenged and should not be considered unchallengeable.

as to believe something the manipulator wants him to believe or to act in a particular mode the manipulator wants him to act; b) the rational capacities of the persons involved and, in particular, the relating capacities of the manipulee; c) the overall harm done by means of manipulative actions; d) the impairment of the manipulee's autonomy. Contrary to standard accounts of manipulation, the CODI theory offers conceptual tools and empirical investigations to understand why manipulations operate efficiently, and particularly so in certain types of cases. Among these are those that have been associated with the so-called "battered women syndrome" which refers to a range of symptoms manifesting an acquired helplessness and co-dependence, low self-esteem or even self-denigration, or proneness to strong feelings of guilt and shame. As argued above, there are cases in which manipulative interventions lead to dynamic social interactions in terms of an unintended and unacknowledged tacit complicity on part of the manipulee. This very peculiar response helps to reduce the manipulee's cognitive dissonance which, in the first place, occurred owing to the manipulator's encroachment. Undoubtedly, interaction of this kind impairs the manipulee's autonomy and leads her to go far beyond a usual understanding of rational belief formation and decision-making. It nonetheless is rational at least in terms of self-preservation.¹⁹ On these conditions, it is not surprising that in such cases the manipulee tacitly supports the manipulator's policy of concealment or opaque communication which is part of the definition of manipulation (see part I). If this is a correct description of the relating cases, we may assume that BOLI cases of manipulation will even be more "efficient" or successful than can a broad range of coercive actions that lack this additional aspect of complicity though they do not operate on physical threats either (and are akin to manipulative actions in this latter respect). To be sure, from a practical and a political point of view, acknowledging complicity as part of BOLI cases of manipulation is a sensitive and highly problematic issue. If it is true that manipulees, at some deep (unconscious) and hidden level of interaction, can have a paradoxical and ambivalent stake in cooperating with their manipulators, it surely becomes more difficult to publicly take responsibility for manipulative actions, criticize and restrain them or get rid of them. As the above discussion of the idea of an expertise in manipulating ("expert manipulator") has shown, it is worth pondering whether the topic of manipulation calls for moral considerations in terms of the difference between strangers and non-strangers. In any case, analyzing BOLI cases of manipulation requires taking note of individual circumstances and social relations holding between those who manipulate and those who are subject to manipulative actions. At this juncture, it is helpful to take up those conceptual distinctions I introduced in the first part, namely the distinction between objective (epistemic or moral) authority, on the one hand, and social authority, on the other. We may do so by responding to an objection Moti Gorin advanced against standard accounts of manipulation recently. This objection is directed towards the so-called *Bypass or Subvert View of manipulation* which is introduced as "the dominant view of interpersonal manipulation" (Gorin 2014, p. 59). It holds that manipulation necessarily involves the bypassing or subversion of the manipulated agent's rational capacities (Gorin 2014, p. 51). In challenging this approach the author construes several exemplary counterexamples that are meant to show that it is not true that manipulation necessarily undermines the manipulee's rational capacities (Gorin

19 What appears "irrational" from the point of view of the immanent standards of an idealized notion of human reason need not be irrational in terms of psychological self-preservation. In this vein, one may argue that on certain conditions it can appear rational not to insist on rational standards. There are different levels of self-preservation which comprise (for only mentioning the bottom-up and top-down operating extreme poles), deep-level instinctive behavior and highest-level self-determination with a view to certain ideals of acting reasonably and morally responsible.

2014, pp. 55-57). There are situations in which the former even enhances the latter as is evident, for instance, from certain paternalistic decisions physicians may feel inclined to (Gorin 2014, pp. 55f). In concluding, the author states that the provision of good reasons and sound arguments can be used manipulatively (Gorin 2014, p. 59). Depending on the given situations and the overall ends an agent may try to realize this seems to be a plain truth. Take, for instance, the following situation: I utter a statement (upon a certain matter of fact) which I believe to be true in the presence of another person who, as I know for sure owing to the deliberate indiscretion of a common friend, does not trust me, rather expects me to deceive him whenever possible. In this situation I have used good reasons and sound arguments manipulatively. Gorin comments on this possible track as follows: “One implication of this result [that it is possible to make use of good reasons and sound arguments in a manipulative manner, SR] is that insofar as manipulation is thought to be morally problematic, providing others with good reasons and sound arguments can sometimes be morally problematic.” (Gorin 2014, p. 59) I consider this statement to be misleading if not straightforwardly false. The trouble arises owing to the reduced form of its utterance. Providing others with good reasons and sound arguments can, of course, be morally problematic if they are utilized in such a way that one defies rational demands and, instead, plays on contingent or merely subjective aspects that one considers suitable to accomplish one’s goal by non-rational means. What is morally problematic therefore is not the plain usage of good reasons and sound arguments but the fact that they are advanced on certain conditions *that are independent of their content*. These are: i) the reasons and arguments function merely as a means for realizing the manipulator’s end which goes beyond the (supposed) truth-conduciveness of the reasons and arguments in question; ii) the manipulator takes care to conceal i) from the other person he is communicating with. On these conditions, it is a merely arbitrary fact whether the reasons are good or bad and whether the arguments are sound or faulty. The difference does not matter *in the situation at issue* in which the manipulator, ultimately, utilizes the other person’s rational capacity by subordinating it to an arbitrary role of social authority that he ascribes to himself. Without mentioning the opposing notions of epistemic authority and social authority Claudia Mills appropriately summarizes the crucial difference: “A manipulator judges reasons and arguments not by their quality but by their efficacy. A manipulator is interested in reasons not as logical justifiers but as causal levers. For the manipulator, reasons are tools, and a bad reason can work as well as, or better than, a good one” (Mills 1995, p. 100 f). If interpreted in a properly cautious way, we may nonetheless consent to Gorin’s statement that it is possible to manipulate others *without* bypassing their rational capacities, actively interfering with these capacities, exploiting an inherent flaw in them or otherwise hindering them from functioning in a proper way (Gorin 2014, p. 58). There is, of course, a difference between abstaining from addressing someone’s rational capacity and actively undermining it. However, I do not agree with the author’s view that, the above (bypassing-, interfering- and exploiting-) options excluded, we should describe the situation by holding that “while I manipulate you, I fully engage your rational capacities” (Gorin 2014, p. 58). Though this is how things may appear from the point of view of the manipulee thanks to (or at least supported by) her successful reduction of cognitive dissonance,²⁰ it does not accurately describe the

20 This explanation is by no means merely psychological as one may object. It touches upon the intentional structure of the relevant actions, the mutual perceptions of the persons involved, mutually displayed emotions and mutually accessible judgements; and it also includes the socially acquired self-understanding of the agents which clearly is at stake in manipulative actions.

situation from the manipulator's point of view. The manipulator is in a privileged position. He has additional information at his disposal which concerns the overall (deceiving!) nature of the interpersonal relation at hand. To be sure, it could turn out that what I want you to believe or what I want you to do is a true belief and is (morally) right to do. Even in this case it would, however, be inadequate to talk as if you acquired a justified true belief (or knowledge) or as if you effectuated a morally justified mode of acting. To be sure, this is what could be expected if I actually fully engaged your rational capacities. Yet I did not do so. I merely relied upon your (habitual practice of your) rational capacities as a proper means to attain my arbitrary (non-rational) end. From the point of view of rational and moral agency, this is a fundamental difference – whether or not it remains unnoticed in the practical context at issue. Proceeding like this, I do not acknowledge you as a reasonable and morally responsible co-agent. When treating others in this way, I, however, risk to lose my own claim to reason; I think and act as if it were insignificant whether others acknowledge me as a reasonable and morally responsible agent. If my previous considerations are right this is a totally flawed idea. Reason works in a strictly non-exclusionary manner, both in theoretical and practical contexts. It is, in principle, sharable though not always actually shared.

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